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1837





ENGLAND'S IRON DAYS.

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY

NATHANIEL HARRINGTON BANNISTER;

AUTHOR OF

"Gaulantus," "Caius Silius," "Marriage Contract," "Wandering Jew," "Washington," "Infidelity," "Gustavani," "'Tis Freedom's Call," "Adventures of a Sailor," "The Serpent's Glen," "The Midnight Murder," &c. &c.

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1837.

STAD ZOLT ENVAJHED

PS1064
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TO

EDWIN FORREST Esq.,

(COMEDIAN).

THIS TRAGEDY IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.



BEFORE I close this manuscript for publication, I deem it incumbent upon me, to express to my friends, my gratitude for the very liberal support they have afforded me, in my professional career. Some few years back I arrived at New Orleans, a perfect stranger; and the kindness of the inhabitants of this city fostered my earliest efforts. Presuming upon your former favors, I respectfully place before you, for perusal, the following publication, "with all its imperfections on its head;" and that, the literary and commercial interests of his country may continue to flourish, is the earnest and fervent prayer, of

THE AUTHOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

WILFRED.

LORD EDGAR.

EARL MONMOUTH.

ALASTER.

ETHELWOOD.

SIR WALTER ARCHBERRY.

CASWALLER.

GULBERTH.

STRANBERG.

KING.

EDWERTH.

Conspirators, Knights, Courtiers, and Ladies.

ELGINA.

ENGLAND'S IRON DAYS.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Street.*

Enter GULBERTH and STRANBURG.

Gul. I tell thee, Stranburg, there never was a Soldier, better mettld than my father ;
He fought, and won, in nine goodly battles.

Stran. Each step thou tak'st, thou dost increase in Number ; some paces back thou did'st count but five.

Gul. Thou dost mistake ; I have not liv'd seventy Years, so to forget myself.

Stran. I am right.

Gul. Then my memory does me not justice ;
For 'tis seldom I err in my reck'ning ;
Let me see—How many years have pass'd
Since our army return'd from the crusade ?

Stran. Scarce one.

Gul. Right, right, I always make my reck'ning good.
Though thou art of Norman blood, I have seen
Some sparks of honesty kindle in thee.
Lord Edgar, whom I serve, and love not more
Than servant should, hath noted thee ; and, if
Thou lack'st employ, will give thee place and hire.

Stran. Is he to his vassals kind ?

Gul. Truly he's impetuous and splenetic
At times ; but he's rich, powerful, and great :
I lov'd his father, as my very blood.
He had another son, of bastard birth,
With qualities a king might boast to own ;
He, was his father's son.

Stran. Lives he in England now ?

Gul. When my old master died, Lord Edgar (whom May the saints forgive), thrust him from the door ;
Poor Wilfred ! I lov'd him as my own :
He, took his mother by the hand, one morn,
And went unto Lord Edgar's house ;
My master, furious that I let them in,
Rush'd at me with his sword ; but, Wilfred's arm
Caught his uplifted weapon ; upon which,
In language most opprobrious, he vented
Forth his spleen, with "wanton !" "bastard !" and words
Of cruellest nature. Wilfred, still patient,
Answering his fury but with a smile,
Bore his fainting mother to a cottage,
On the river's banks ; where, lack of food soon
Ended her existence ; and, Wilfred fled,
None knew whither. Poor boy ! I lov'd
Him better than myself ; and the recital
Of his wrongs, makes my old wither'd heart bleed afresh.

Stran. By my troth ! my eyes do ache to hear thee.
I choose not Lord Edgar for my master ;
I am well suited now.

Gul. Stranburg, I honor thee : thy hand, I pr'ythee ;
I do sometimes vaguely talk, when childish
Age comes on : years, seventy, have I counted ;
And, do confess to thee, I often feel
As tho' I were again within the cradle,
Craving some toy to sport with, to wile away
Dull hours. But come, 'tis the beginning time
Of labor ; he that will not work, deserveth
Not his hire, and wrongs the master that doth
Employ him.

(*Exit GULBERTH and STRANBURG.*)

Enter LORD EDGAR and ETHELWOOD.

Edgar. I tell thee, Ethelwood, I like him not ;
Tho' young, he's wise, ay, and ambitious too ;
A loyal subject, tho' of Saxon blood ;
Devoted to his king, and country's good,
He stands a bulwark 'gainst my dearest hopes.

Elgina's love he boasts; her smile is his;
And once, I saw him quaff the nectar of
Her lips; it made my blood quick ebb and flow,
And my whole frame with indignation shook.
Alaster is a rock will wreck my hopes,
Unless I pilot well.

Ethel. What says Earl Monmouth to your suit?

Edgar. Elgina, long hath been a promis'd bride;
Yet, I, by cunning art and tales well forg'd,
Have won Earl Monmouth's favor and his love;
By inuendoes dark, portray'd this boy,
Alaster, in colors black as night;
And, yesterday, I ask'd the fair Elgina's
Hand; thereby to bind Earl Monmouth mine.

Ethel. What said the Earl, to this?

Edgar. Promis'd me an answer on the morrow.

Ethel. Should you get England's throne and crown,
He, surely, could not then refuse your suit.

Edgar. Right. By sums of gold, already have I
Many secret friends secur'd within the very
Entrails of the palace; therefore, the path
In some degree is smooth, that leads me to
The goal I seek, but, thorns will sometimes grow
In fairest track, and prick the walker on
His way; but, thou my friend, must root them up,
And plant my road with flowers; see our friends
Sow well the seed, and doubt not, but thou shalt
Reap a golden harvest.

Ethel. Fear not, my lord; thy many favors
In grateful memory, I bear, and to
Repay the debt, I set to work with prompt
Alacrity; not doubting of success. *(Exit.)*

Edgar. The Saxon has grown sick of Norman
tyranny;
Any change will serve;—they thirst for it.—
A throne! How proud the seat—how lofty is
The name! Once seated there, I dare confront,
And mock, the murmurs of the prating world.
(Exit.)

SCENE II. *A Garden,*

(ALASTER and ELGINA discovered, seated.)

Ala. Behold, my love, how bright the jewell'd sky,
 Enwrap't in smiles the starry host appears
 In sportive pleasure round night's queenly bride.
 Gemm'd roof of earth, the great ethereal plain
 That looks o'er sea, o'er city, and o'er alpine height,
 And loud proclaims the power and glory
 Of that king, who sits in Heaven enthron'd.
 My Elgina, 'twas such a night as this,
 When 'mid the fury of conflicting hosts,
 My strength exhausted, weary nature
 Lull'd me to repose, e'en on the bodies
 Of those who slept on the cold lap of death;
 'Twas then I dreamt of home and thee;
 I saw thy aerial form quick pass, and sprang to clasp thee,
 But waking from my sleep, I felt the
 Misery of disappointed love.

Elg. Thou art a flatterer still.

Ala. Sweet, thou do'st not think me so. Once,
 Thy tongue trembl'd to speak the love thy
 Heart was fraught with,—
 Thy blushes answer'd my appeal; but, now
 The times have chang'd, and change of dearest import,
 Is to me, the true avowal of thy
 Dear heart's love.

Elg. Alaster, I am thine; for ever, thine!

(*embraces him.*)

Ala. Thrice happy hour, I hail thee with delight!
 Be thy hallowed moments ever bless'd.

Elg. But 'tis a warring time, a bleeding age;
 Each blast of wind some evil tidings blow:
 My heart, foreboding ill, is not at rest.

Ala. What fatal cloud obscures the sunshine of
 That beauteous face? That front, where lavish
 Nature bount'ously hath set her seal
 Of rarest beauty.

Elg. My father, with a jealous eye doth view
Our nightly meetings : Lord Edgar oft' comes
Here, and with my father frequent council holds ;
Often they speak of me,—at times of you ;
And, then, I've noted on Lord Edgar's brow
A chilling frown,—
A biting of the lip, anger-shifting eyes,
And other marks, that plainly told me
Thou had'st no friend in him ; therefore, shun him,
He were a dangerous foe. My father,
Whom thou know'st prizes honor as his life,
Will doubtless question thee ; for, yesterday
Lord Edgar told some tale of knightly arms,
Tending to thy dishonor ; my father
Started, his cheek was pale, but credence gave he none :
I saw the fiend lurk in the villian's eye.

Ala. Were he ten times a potentate or prince.
I'd with his life my reputation mend.

Elg. Be not rash, Alaster, I may be wrong,
Hast thou done aught to injure him ?

Ala. Aye.

Elg. What ?

Ala. Sav'd his caitiff life.

Elg. Ha ! Speak, love.

Ala. Thou shalt know, then. Lord Edgar and
myself,

With the crusading army, battl'd side by side ;
On that proud day, when bodies numberless
O'erspread the plain, within a sword's length we stood ;
The last gleam of the red sun sank in ocean's lap,
And left the crescent warriors and ourselves
Upon the field of blood and strife ;
Shrieks, groans, and curses were silenc'd
By the loud clarion, and the clash of arms ;
Lord Edgar, with his soldiers, hard press'd
By turban'd warriors, o'er number'd by the foe,
Gave way, wading through very gore, for safety ;
Just then, from a covert, by wood enclos'd,
The enemy's horse sprang forth ;
I call'd for aid, then darted to his rescue ;

Before I reach'd the spot his coward friends,
That with him fled, lay on the ground in death,
And Lord Edgar, at his conquerer's feet,
Imploring mercy knelt. Above his head,
A glittering scymiter was held to strike ;
When with a blow, I laid the foeman dead,
Then bore Lord Edgar to his tent unhurt.
'Till now I ne'er had spoke of this ; nor, should
The tale be utter'd, save in mine own defence.

Elg. What said Lord Edgar ?

Ala. Thank'd me with icy coldness.

Elg. Oh, base return ! Oh, cold ingratitude !
A deed well worthy thy great name and blood,
My gallant hero. Earth's loud trumpet tongue,
Whose blast exalts to honor and to fame
Hath not done justice to thy arms in war ;
But 'tis ever thus, Alaster ; the world still
Holds him greatest, whose deeds are heard,
Not seen ; but, I will be thy world—admire, and
Reward thee.

Ala. Bless thee, my Elgina ! I have not words
To speak the extacy, doth swell my heart, withal.

Elg. Restrain thy transport. Night wears apace,
The dews are falling, and chilling breezes
Fill the air. Fare thee well, Alaster ; and,
On the morrow, see my father ; his consent
Obtain'd, in weal or woe, I'll constant ever be.

Ala. Through those pearly drops thine eyes emit,
I see a soul of purity and truth,
Where virtue, glory, honor sits enthron'd.

Elg. See not Lord Edgar ; what hath pass'd
Breathe not to mortal.

Ala. Trust me I will not 'till more I hear ;
But, Elgina, of this be well assur'd,
A true knight's sword, cannot in its scabbard
Rest, when honor claims its service. But,
Content thee, love.

(*enter* EARL MONMOUTH)

Mon. How's this ; my daughter and Alaster here ?

Elg. Ah, my father! (*goes to him*)

Ala. My benefactor!

Mon. The hour befits not—Get thee to bed,

Elgina. Alaster, 'tis not well.

Meetings by stealth, I never can approve.

She was once thy promis'd bride; but, now—

Ala. Have I offended

Mon. Boy; for such I deem thee, still; thy father
Was my friend. At the festal board have we
Drain'd dry the sparkling goblet; hand in hand
In the field, the lists, and on the hunting
Track, have we together fought and bled.
Alas! he is no more.

Ala. And, I, of all his sons stand here the last.
While life yet hover'd on his dying lips,
He bade me win thy love and friendship,
Cost whatsoe'er it might.

Mon. Well, there's my hand, and, I defy the voice
Of man, speak it truth,
To call it other than an honest one;
And, tho' time has robb'd it of some strength,
Yet is it still strong enough to strike the blow,
When the imperious voice of honor bids.
My child go in.

Elg. Father, I obey. Good night, Alaster.

Ala. Sweet, good night; repose go with thee.

(*exit ELGINA.*)

Mon. Alaster, you must see my child no more.
Be not amaz'd at what I've spoken.

Ala. See her no more! then take my life—take all.
Without Elgina, life would be one drear,
Eternal night; beamless; and, Oh! how bereft
Of charm, and all things bright.
What is my crime?

Mon. Has't mark'd in me, of late a change;
A colder welcome than I was wont to greet
Thee with?

Ala. I have— Fain would I know the cause.

Mon. Thy honor's stain'd;
Thy, once fair name is sullied.

Ala. If, the foul and venom'd breath of slander,
Hath, with its viperous sting, my honor stain'd,
Give to me the caitiff's name ; set him here ;
Be, he of Herculean strength, my sword shall force
Confession from his dastard heart.
His tongue did speak a lie.

Mon. I have heard thee coward call'd ; Janus-fac'd !
A treason plotter ; and the Norman's tool.

Ala. And the villian lives, whose tongue dar'd
utter it !

I could name actions, in my country's cause
That loud would give the lie ;—but, let that pass.
His name ? That I may send his envenom'd breath
Back to his heart, to breed corruption there.

Mon. Boy ; there are other cowards, than the man
Who quakes and trembles, at a sword unsheath'd ;
Nor, does it test true courage, to brawl, and
Draw at every slight offence your weapon ;
Bullies in brothels, and other haunts of
Crime and vice, who, nothing know of courage
But the name, will out with sword, and slay ;
Then, with hands uncleans'd, boast their deeds noble ;
Ay, and men will call them brave.
Should I reveal to thee, the name of him
Who stain'd thy honor ;—thy valor doubted ;—
Call'd thee coward—How would'st thou act ?

Ala. Make him answer with his blood.

Mon. Well spoken boy ; thy blood is Saxon still.
To-morrow thou shalt know, Farewell !

(exit abruptly.)

Ala. Stay !——He's gone ; whom can he mean ?
Lord Edgar cannot be so vile, so base ;
Yet did not Elgina say he spoke me ill ;
Be calm my rising heart ; thy struggles check.
Coward ! my blood boils in my heated veins ;
I do abhor a term so vile, so base. Oh patience !
Beneath the 'nointed banner of the cross I swore,
My honor, with my life I would maintain.

(exit.)

SCENE III. *An apartment in Lord Edgar's House.*

(*enter* ETHELWOOD, ARCHBERRY, CASWALLER, and Gentlemen.)

Ethel. I do again repeat, our king is old ;
Unfit to govern. Lord Edgar, for our
Country much hath done ; lent the state large sums,
To fill our sinking coffers ; added, to which,
He is of Saxon blood, and worthy
By his birth, to sit on England's throne.
A king in him would raise the Saxon
Interest, and abridge the Norman power ;
Under whose yoke we long have groan'd

Arch. There is much wisdom in thy words.

Cas. If, to be a good man, is to be a
Rich one, then is Lord Edgar worthy.
Full well I know, judgment and wisdom had
His father,—Our laws improved,
And did more good than any since

Ethel. We now in slavery live—naught better.
An English throne should bear an English monarch.

Cas. Well, I am with you, gentlemen ;
Command my sword.

But secret must our meetings still remain ; caution
Best will guide our councils ; the Normans are
Ever on the watch ; they have their spies abroad.

Ethel. The keenest spy by gold is silenc'd.
Take, thou, no heed of that, our party's strong ;
Could we but win Earl Monmouth, all were well.
I know him wise ; well vers'd in man ; can
Read a subtle plot, ere it be ripe for action ;
Could he be bought—but this I doubt.

Arch. Lord Edgar seeks his daughter, Elgina's
Hand, that accomplish'd, 'twill bind the Earl
Fast to our cause ; by that achieving, our
Securement will be perfect ; for his voice,
And birth, would cover our defections.

(*enter* LORD EDGAR.)

Edgar. Worthy Archberry and Ethelwood, your hands ;

We have been soldiers, the cross our standard ;
Our object England's good and fame ; still
Let our country's glory lead us onward.
Gentlemen, I'm well apprized of what you
Do intend, I bow your servant faithful.
The firm expressions of your loyalty
I've heard, for which I thank you ; and, doubt not
But it shall meet a fair return ; when king,
If such should be my lot, you all shall share
The benefit, power can bestow.

Ethel. We doubt it not.

Edgar. Ethelwood, my friend, lead to the feast
That waits within ; good cheer be with ye all ;
On, I follow you.

(exit all but EDGAR.)

At length the height is compass'd—that proud height,
To which on eagle's wings I've dar'd to soar.

Elgina never can reject a king—

Yes, she will be mine ; and, thus I quaff,
E'en to the bottom, the ambrosial cup of hope.

Be boyant, my proud heart ! Get England's crown,
And fair Elgina's hand shall soon be mine.—

Great England's crown ! I'd swim in seas of blood,
And from the crimson waves would pluck it forth,
And in triumph 'twine it round my brow.

Earl Monmouth do I fear ; his keen mind

May scan my mystery. Away, with fears and doubts !

The crown's the glorious prize that lures me on,

And I'll not pause while climbing the ascent.

Away with conscience—justice—all the checks

That lie upon my path ! the way to rise,

Is to forego them all ; when once a king,

None will enquire the road by which I rose.

(exit.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Landscape.*

Enter STRANGER, *miserably attired.*

Stran. The goal I've reach'd, safe in my native land.
Five years a stranger to its soil I've been:
I love the pebbles that I tread upon;
Each thing I see, bears a familiar look.
Hail to my birth place! I am thine again.
There the old steep'd church, known well by all,
It's roof grown grey with age, and tott'ring with decay;
And there the flowing stream, where in my boat,
I've with delight its glossy waters plough'd.
Boyhood, thou art past! but, yet how sweet
To con thy happy days, and from memory's store
Quaff pleasure's cup. Ah, joy! thou'st miss'd thy
place;
Thou can'st not in this mansion dwell.—Go hence.
This heart, alas! how sadly tenanted;
Deep in its core, gaunt misery sits enthron'd,
The peerless monarch of a dessert world.
Dame Fortune once was kind to me; my food
She did prepare; forsooth, I now must buy it,
And, if the means I lack, whereby to live,
In faith, I needs must die a starving death.
For an earl's son, and, one not quite an ass,
'Though peradventure, not o'er bless'd with brains,
My fate, I think, a hard one.
They tell me I am bastard born—
They tell me truth.
The fault's not mine; so let my father answer it.
Wives oft' play the harlot, decking their husband's
brows,
While spurious offsprings claim a father's love
From those, who ne'er begot them; but, for those,

Alike the victim and the monument
 Of a frail mother's shame, e'en to the core
 They feel that woe, from whence there's no relief.
 My life made weary, by my bastard birth,
 Sent me to foreign climes; but, even there,
 Base-born was shouted in mine echoing ear.
 I have my members well as other men;
 Flesh, blood, sinew, nerve, yet, I am not lov'd,
 Nor look'd on with a cloudless sunny face.
 There stands the palace, near which, my brother dwells.
 Shall I see him? Will he own me? I'll try.
 I shall find him in costly, gaudy robes,
 While I, his outcast brother, live in misery.
 I'll try his heart, once more; time, may have chang'd
 It into one, fit for a human bosom.
 Who comes? I'll step aside, and mark.

(retires.)

*Enter GULBERTH, STRANBURG, EDWERTH,
 and NORMANS.*

Gul I say, we are not better than the slaves,
 Save, they cannot sell us, as their cattle,
 And lash our backs, as they, their asses do;
 Yet, they deserve the yoke, who bear it,
 And, lack the soul to shake it from their necks.

Edw. Thoud'st better not so loudly talk my friend;
 Or, from your mouth, thy tongue we'll pluck.

Gul. Not speak! that's harder still to bear.
 Normans, full well I know, you will not shrink
 From murder—or aught else that's vile and base.

All. Down with the old Saxon fool!

*(as they rush towards him, the STRANGER advances
 before him.)*

Stran. Would you slay an old man grey with age?
 Upon his brow, behold time's envious march;
 Bending his feeble body to the earth.
 Youth should forgive the petulance of age.

Edw. Who's he, that speaks so well, yet looks so meagre?

Gul. You've sav'd me from these butchers.

Stran. Nay, not so; you do miscall them,
Foolish man.

Edw. He is ever croaking—ever fretful.

Stran. 'Tis nature. Men become nervous, sour'd,
As age creeps on; their fretful weakness
We should o'erlook, and bear with patience.
His pilgrimage on earth, in nature's course,
Is almost o'er; do not haste its end.
Leave him with me, kind friends.

Edw. He is of a strange cast, truly. Come, the
Beggar hath beaten us. Friends, away.

(exit all but STRANGER and GULBERTH)

Gul. They would have cuff'd me roundly: stranger,
A good service hast thou done me;
For I vented on the knaves my words of gall,
Nor felt the bitter, which I fear I should,
But for thy good office.

Stran. *(Half aside, with his eyes rivetted on Gulberth.)*
Iv'e scann'd that face, and know it now, full well.
Friend of my early years—Friend of my childhood—
My school days companion——

Gul. Of whom do you speak?

Stran. *(recovering)* Of one that pass'd.

Gul. Ar't thou of Saxon blood?

Stran. Of Saxon blood.

Gul. Do thy friends dwell here?

Stran. Friends! What dost thou call a friend?

Gul. One of a good heart; who hath a purse,
And grudgeth not to open it to thee.

Stran. Friend have I none, then. Farewell, old man

Gul. Tut, tut! be not so hasty.

Stran. The day grows old; I have work ere night-fall.

Gul. Would'st seek my friendship?

Stran. For what?

Gul. Thy benefit. I like thy face.

Stran. Thou dost not know me.

Gul. I judge thee by thy looks.

Stran. Old man, thou mock'st me with untruths.

Gul. What say'st thou?

Stran. Tame thy blood—tame thy blood. Passion
shakes old age

Most fatally. You say you love my face?

A scar upon my forehead—my chin o'ergrown
With an unseemly beard—Beauty it hath none.
Therefore, thou can'st not read that index of
The mind. Thus in misery's disguising livery
Array'd appearing now most foul; if cleans'd,
Perchance, some fairer index might disclose.
Yet, know thou this, the face oft'times belies
The heart. Farewell.

Gul. Stay.

Stran. Well.

Gul. By my soul, I love thee. Take this purse.
Although, it cost me toil and sweat of brow.

Stran. Then, keep it, old man. I have my pride,
Though box'd in rags, Gulberth.

Gul. Dost know my name?

Stran. I've heard it. Lord Edgar's steward once.

Gul. Lord Edgar's steward still.

Stran. Point me out his house.

Gul. Close by the palace, there.

Stran. I mark.

Gul. Take the purse.

Stran. I tell thee, no.

Gul. Take, thou, one piece of gold.

Stran. Not from thee, old man. Charity I'll crave
From those, who giving, injure not themselves.
Come, point me out thy master's house, I fain
Would speak to him. Wil't do it?

Gul. Troth will I; come this way; but thy name.

Stran. I'll tell thee that, anon. Give me thy hand.
Ne'er mind its grasp; 'tis hard with labour;
Nor would I change that hand my Maker gave,
To hold a kingdom in the other. *(exit both.)*

SCENE II. *Outside of Lord Edgar's House.*

enter GULBERTH and STRANGER.

Gul. Tarry thou here, good friend. I'll send Lord Edgar to thee.

(enters house.)

Stran. Do so, good fellow. I remember me,
A dream last night did much disturb my rest.
Methought, I stood upon the fearful bank
Of a deep pit ; beneath me loudly lashing
The troubl'd waters, like to human groans,
Deaf'ning my sense of hearing ; above my head,
The gathering clouds let loose their thunders,
Shaking the huge pillars of the vast earth ;
And at my feet the deep ravine did ope'
Showing, to my aching eyes, in the
Deep void below, a gulph of liquid fire ;
Upon the extremest verge, rivetted
With fear and wonder, appall'd I stood ;
Just then, my brother, with Herculean strength,
Seiz'd me by the throat, and I plung'd down,
Shrieking in accents wild for succour,
While he, with laugh demoniac triumph'd ;
Smoke in curling clouds, my form encas'd,
And the sulphurous flame sing'd my limbs and flesh ;
But an arm invisible, toss'd me back
Upon the earth ; and, shuddering with fear,
I found the busy hag of night had been
At work upon my brain.

(enter LOTD EDGAR.)

Stran, Good morning to your grace.

Edg. What beggar'd wretch is this ?

Stran. One, who does not dread a tailor's bill,
As thou may'st see , yet willingly would wear
A better suit.

Edg. Thou art in a merry mood.

Stran. No ; thou, mistak'st me ; did I follow
The promptings of my heart, my eyes would melt
To tears. There is a man, whose smile could do't,
Whose recognition of one, who long has been
A stranger to his native land, would gladden
His sad heart.

Edg. Thou'rt mad ; pass on thy way.

Stran. 'Tis through the door thou'st left unclos'd,
And often on its threshold, in my childhood,
Have I play'd.

Edg. Who ar't thou ?

Stran. Frown not Edgar.

Edg. Ah !

Stran. 'Tis Wilfred, thy brother.

Edg. Bastard ! begone ; I know thee not.

Wil. I never wrong'd thee, Edgar.

Edg. Base born, and baser minded, I do disown
thee.

Wil. Vent on me thy hate.

Edg. No ties of kindred, should the bastard bind
Unto the true-born son ; then get thee hence ;
Seek in another clime, where thou'rt unknown,
A fortune, thy base birth denies thee here.
The law will give thee naught. Begone !

Wil. I pray you be more calm good brother ;
Thy tongue, outruns discretion far.

Edg. Thy father lov'd thee not.

Wil. A fair return this, brother, for an absence
Of so many years, thou'rt but little chang'd.
You say, my father lov'd me not ; that, may
Perchance, be true. My mother's dead ;
Full well I know, by proof, I had her love.
The only kin, my fate has left me now,
Is thee—my father's true-born son and heir ;
Therefore, I claim, if not by law, by right,
Something to give me place and sustenance.

Edg. I'll give thee naught. Wilt thou incense me ?

Wil. Dost thou not blush ? Or, hath thy riches
Drain'd thy blood, and left the channels of thy
Body, dry as is thy barren heart ?

Edg. (*half drawing*) Wretch!

Wil. Thy breast, doth know of virtue but the name.

Edg. Approach, thou, within the purlieus of this,
My dwelling, and, by the saints above,
I'll have thee lash'd and fetter'd.

Wil. Heartless monster! Unnatural brother!
My fingers to the bone I'll grind, before
I ask thee for thy lordly table's waste.

Edg. Take thy death.

(*thrusts at WILFRED, who wrenches sword from him.*)

Wil. My hand bleeds—'tis slight. No matter,
'Twill be well, anon. Take thy sword, Edgar;
Pass on; the day is thine. Thy star burns brightly;
Some cloud of fate may yet obscure its light,
And darken thy ambitious path of crime.

Edg. Drivelling fool! see, thou confront'st me not
again.

(*exit into house.*)

Wil. For thy sake brother, I'll my nature change,
And be a serpent that shall sting thy soul;
My fork'd tongue, in venom steep'd, shall blast
Thy sports, pervert and poison thy fair name,
'Till earth shall seem to thee a second hell.

exit.

SCENE III. *A grand Hall. In the centre, folding
Doors; massive chairs and table on right.*

Enter LORD EDGAR, from centre doors.

Edg. Alive! I deem'd his bones had rotted long
Ere this. But, he's here to blast me with his
Hated sight. Wilfred and Edgar must not
In one kingdom live, nor the same air breathe;
I'll have him silenc'd. He has more wisdom,
Than I dare to cope with. Alaster, too, my
Bane, as well as he, shall, when power is mine,

Be thrust from my path ; where like two adders
They stalk, to sting me with their poison'd fangs.
Alaster, by the King and court is held
In estimation high, and honor great :
My rival too in love : he, also, sav'd my life ;
If for naught else, for that I hate him ;
And, by forg'd tales, dark, and subtile,
Have I Elgina and her father cheated ;
Making Alaster appear in characters
So foul ; that, 'till the stain is clear'd away,
I stand in favor with the Earl, her father.

enter GULBERTH.

Gul. Sir Walter Archberry, and Ethelwood,
With friends, do wait your bidding to be here.

Edgar. Let them enter.

Gul. May one ask, the name of that same beggar,
Who crav'd e'en now, some converse with you ?

Edgar. (*aside*) Ha ! he does not know. I am glad
of it ;

He once profess'd great love for him,

Gul. Knows your lordship, who he is ?

Edgar. A worthless beggar, craving alms. Tarries
He now without ?

Gul. No ; he sped in haste. He did me a good,
But now.

Edgar. Ha ! how ?

Gul. Sav'd my grey hairs, from a pack of knaves,
Who never kept the curfew hour, or aught else
That's good ; the very wastings of the town ;
Who think of naught but mirth and revelling.

(*a knock without.*)

Edgar. Go, answer the summons ; let in my friends.

Gul. That will I, 'though, I but little like them.
These secret councils are mysterious :
My lord, my lord, let not your friends misguide
Your judgment.

Edgar. Prating fool ! do, as I command thee.

Gul. Prating fool! thy brother Wilfred would not
Have call'd the old man by so foul a name.
Would he were now alive. Ah, well-a-day!

(exit.)

Edgar Why do I keep that scurvy knave about
My dwelling? He is ever prying in
My purposes. Well encounter'd friends.

Enter SIR WALTER ARCHBERRY, ETHELWOOD
CASWALLER, and CONSPIRATORS.

Arch. Long live Lord Edgar!

Ethel. That soon shall be our king.

Arch. If fortune changes not her fickle mind.

Cas. We gain no ground as yet, among the great;
True, we have fencers, dicers, thieves, outlaws,
The common sweepings of society.
Men of such a cast soon would change for gold.

Edgar. The very best men sir, for work like ours;
They know each avenue of the city—
Each secret corner—and keys they have for
Every lock.

Ethel. They are of desperate soul too.

Arch. They look at danger, as if 'twere pleasure
To confront it.

Edgar. We now do live in very servitude,
Depending on this king's caprice and will.
We all have serv'd the kingdom, but reward
Receiv'd none. While others are exalted
Into power, by favor of the court;
We, for ourselves, a monument build, that
Human kind, in latest time, shall hear of
With amaze.

Ha! Earl Monmouth comes. Be seated, gentlemen.

(all sit but LORD EDGAR.)

enter EARL MONMOUTH.

Mon. Heaven save you, gentlemen.

(all bow and uncover.)

Edgar. How does my good Earl Monmouth?

Mon. Still breathing Heaven's wholesome breath.

Edgar. Where is thy blooming daughter?

Mon. Where should she be, but in her home? I have
Come Lord Edgar, at thy request, but not
To grant thy wish; yet humbly thanking thee
For the extended honor. Elgina
To Alaster hath been promis'd long;
Hearts long wedded by affections tie.
Yesterday I question'd him, of that, thou
Told'st me;

Resolv'd, if in my search I found him base,
To cast him ever from my heart and home.

Edgar. How answer'd he, thy probing?

Mon. Started, turn'd from pale to red, then ask'd
the
Name of his slanderer; so he term'd him.

Edgar. Did'st thou tell him, 'twas I, Lord Edgar?

Mon. I told him not. He did deny the charge.

Edgar. That, is adding falshood to a fault;
I am full well assur'd, he would not shrink
To engage himself, in all that's base, if
Commanded by the king.

Mon. (*approaching door*) Come in Alaster.

enter Alaster.

Edgar. What means this?

Mon. Behold in Lord Edgar, thy accuser;
Answer him as becomes a knight, and man;
Or, thou'rt no more my son.

Ala. Sunk in my esteem so low before, fall
Lower thou could'st not. See the villian baff'd,
Abash'd, and pale, degrading to himself;
Lord Edgar, I here, do brand thee, coward!
Even here, in the face of this assembly;
And, as I place my glove within thy grasp,
And dare thee, false knight, to the lists,
Proclaim thee, liar! whose canker tongue hath
Eaten, with very gluttony, my own fair

And spotless reputation. But, I have
Here (*touching his sword*) a medicine, the wound shall
heal, or put

The sore past remedy.

There is my glove. (*throws it down.*)

Mon. Thy hand, boy ; I stand thy backer, if needs be
With my blood.

(*exit MONMOUTH and ALASTER.*)

Edgar. Come back ! (*draws his sword*)

Ethel. Stay, my lord.

Edgar. Am I dreaming, or my waking senses
So benumb'd, that my tongue refuses its office?
Curses on curses, light upon his head !

Shame ! shame ! liar ! coward ! my honor impeach'd !

Ethel. Banish this rage ; let prudence take its place.

Ethel. Come, thou, to my private study, at
The first sounding of the curfew bell.

Arch. He may be silenc'd, on his homeward walk
To-night.

Edgar. Come, thou, with Ethelwood to my study.
Into my hall, gentlemen ; I'll join you.

exit all but LORD EDGAR.

A fiercer tempest, ne'er shook man's breast, than
Rages here, in mine. O vengeance, for thy hour !

'Till then, I do but stalk the shadow of
What I am.

I would not, willingly, meet in the lists,
This fire-brain'd boy ; his courage I have seen
Well prov'd. Yet, how escape ?—A dagger in the dark—
The body—Hush ! I must not let the walls
Suspect the thoughts that agitate my soul.
List to the pealing of thy passing bell ;
Vengeance, athirst, prepares to ring thy knell.

(*exit.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A street, on the right is a House.*

WIL. I deem'd a heart so hard could not be found
As that my brother owns. I was deceiv'd.
There lives a man, who in my prosperous days
Fatten'd on my bounty ; whose very knock
At my father's door, was answer'd with a purse ;
Yet he refus'd me a waste crust of bread,
And set his dogs to drive me from his door.
I've counted thirty years in this bad world,
Nor can by nicest calculation name
Acts of vice, to bring me to this misery.
If I remember right, in holy writ,
'Tis so set down, the father's crime descends
Upon the guiltless son.

enter SIR WALTER ARCHBERRY and ETHELWOOD.

ETH. How now, stranger ?

WIL. What is the matter friend, that thus you stare ?

ETH. Giv'st thou no more respect, unmanner'd
knave ;

By thy dark-bearded chin, and wrinkl'd face,
Thou hast counted years enough to teach thee
Better manners, vile plebian.

ARCH. What churlish beast is this ?

WIL. One, with two legs, resembling thee patrician.

ETH. Lack'd thy father means to send thee to a
school,

And so thrust forth an untaught saucy knave ?
Or, know'st thou better breed, as curs do oft',
Yet list to be so saucy and perverse ?

WIL. Do you for a lap-dog take me, sirs, that
You would have me lick from your shoes
The dust? the sycophant I am not,
Nor, can I play the part of one.

ARCH. Wag not thy tongue so loudly?

WIL. 'Twas given me to wag; and, I will speak my
mind.

ETH. Dost thou not fear?

WIL. Of being robb'd? Not I. I've naught to
lose.

ETH. Audacious cur! But we'll improve thee.

WIL. You are bountiful. I covet knowledge much;
And, if freely given, will be better earn'd;
For, by my father's coffin, I have not
Wit enough to get a meal.

ETH. Ha! ha! A plain blunt fellow truly.

ARCH. What's thy name?

WIL. You may call me misery, if you list;]
Or, aught else to suit your sportive humour.

ETH. Where dost thou home?

WIL. Under some hedge, in the open fields;
Where I count the stars, and dream of better
Days.

ETH. Why count the stars?

WIL. For the self-same reason that thou talk'st
To me—for pastime.

ETH. But we are curious to know thee man.

WIL. So am I to count the stars.

ETH. Thou can'st not know *them*.

WIL. Nor can'st thou know *me*.

ETH. Can I serve thee?

WIL. Aye.

ETH. How?

WIL. Give me that will purchase food.

ETH. Gold?

WIL. Enough to satisfy a hungry man.

ETH. Take that. (*gives purse.*)

WIL. Thanks. 'Tis more than enough to get me
food.

Ethelwood, for you see I know your name,

I have a brother, hereabouts, with gold
A prince might covet ; our father dying,
Bequeath'd his wealth to us, in equal shares ;
But, he being gifted with the first serpent's wile,
Stripp'd me of all.

I went abroad, my fortune to rebuild ;
You may perceive my star did dimly shine ;
In brief, the ocean swallowed all my stock on earth ;
Consisting, of a razor, for the beard ;
A tunic, new, and patchings for the same ;
Together with a rust-encrusted sword ;
Two handkerchiefs, my brother's liberal gift ;
With oil and powder, for the face and head ;
A tooth-brush ; knife ; and box for snuff ;
All, with myself, and my old father's chest,
Were wash'd at once, into the briny deep.
On a far distant shore, the waves in kindness
Threw me ; where, for a slave they sold me, and,
Then I felt the lashing of the blood-stain'd whip,
Which made my back oft' red with my own gore ;
But my wisdom beat them ; I curst and run.
Resolv'd to die, ere be recaptur'd ;
My track they miss'd ; a cabin on the sea shore
Shelter'd me, own'd by a fisherman,
Who gave me food, and sent me home again.

ETH. Hast seen thy brother ?

WIL. Aye.

ETH. Did'st tell thy wild career ?

WIL. He read my misery in my rags ;
And would, forsooth, have fell'd me to his feet,
But power met power—and word for word ;
In full, I told him what I thought, and
Left his house.

ETH. Plead with him.

WIL. Plead with the fierce rays of the scorching
sun,

To spare the ice flake, or the mountain's snow !

Plead with the tiger to release his prey !

Plead with the devil to give up a soul !

I scorn to beg : I'd sooner die and rot.

If you dislike my words, take back your gold.

ETH. Do me a service; and, thou shalt have, more
Than that sum, ten times told o'er.

WIL. Fain would I, my tatter'd fortune mend :
Give me the clue to fathom your intents,
And, if the office likes me, why, I'll bargain ;
If not—'tis but farewell ; and I'll depart.

ETH. Come to my house, then, at the twilight hour,
And to thine ear, I will unfold my purpose.

WIL. Where dwell ye, masters ?

ETH. Mark you curling smoke ascending
From the edifice of granite built.

WIL. That which stands beside the palace ?

ETH. Aye.

WIL. I had a grapple there to day, with
One of those same flies that buz around the
Courts of kings—milk-sop nobility ! they
Turn me sick to gaze upon their parchment
Faces ; they'll wear bright swords to dangle at their
Sides, but courage want to draw them forth.

ETH. This ring (*gives ring*) will pass thee bye
unquestion'd. Knock
At the western door, and thou'lt be promptly
Answer'd from within. Wil't come ?

WIL. Troth, will I ; my rags want patching.

ARCH. Be thou prompt ; so shall thy fortune mend.

(*exit ARCHBERRY and ETHELWOOD.*)

WIL. They pointed out my brother's mansion :
This Ethelwood I know, full well ; Edgar's
Meanest tool. I'll know your work, fail I not.
Perhaps, they'd use me in some bloody deed ;
Lacking themselves the metal. Good ! excellent !
Most rare sport for ye ! I look like murder.
Hard fortune will sometimes force us from
The rule of right ;
And, make a white heart, black with infamy.
The man of wealth, will cover with his gold
The stain of blood ; and, drown his conscience
In the goblet's depth ; but, when the fume

Of wine has pass'd, again it seizes on him.
I'll reflect. Reflection's wisdom, and,
Oft' turns foul thoughts to great and good ones.
He, that stumbles in his own esteem,
Will never rise in others' good opinion.
Now for food. Lord Edgar thou hast wrong'd me.
Vengeance were nectar to my famish'd soul;
And I will have it. My day dawns apace.
My sun of fortune mounts the hill of fate,
And soon will burst forth, and in glory shine,
To light my darksome path.

(exit Wilfred.)

SCENE II. *A Street.*

Enter GULBERTH.

GUL. So, the old man's to be call'd a prying knave.
No matter; I'll to the king,
Their treasonous plot discover.
Gulberth, no longer will be trod upon;
Lord Edgar's very footstool have I been,
And in repayment, scoff'd at for my service.
Call'd, "prating fool," and "lying knave."

(enter WILFRED.)

WIL. How now Gulberth, in the clouds?

GUL. Ah, my kind preserver! a friend I lack;
I'm now as poor as thou art, stranger:
But to my king, a subject true,
And loyal.

WIL. Old man, behold this purse; it does contain
The miser's god—the noble statesman's honor;
The throne's chief support; and, the purchase of the
soul.

Gold—that gives eloquence to every tongue ;
Color's o'er the hue of blood ; and, lifts to fame :
This can make the bastard, the honorable issue
Of a princely race.

GUL. If my old eyes do me not injustice,
I see the lineaments of one, whom, I have
Known in happier days.

WIL. Dost remember one cold December night,
When the meanest reptile of the earth
Sought shelter from the keen and pitiless blast ;
The cabin of the river's bank, its roof
And timbers tottering with decay ?

GUL. I do, I do. Ah ! speak.

WIL. On that fearful night, two souls alone were
there :

A man, supporting in his trembling arms
A female, using her last breath in prayer,
To that God, in whose bright mansion she now
Dwells ; she died for want of food. The man knelt
By the body's side—bath'd with his tears the corpse
Then curs'd Lord Edgar, from his inmost soul.

GUL. Ha ! How know you this ? you——

WIL. I, am that man !

GUL. It is, it is, my master's son. (*kneels.*)

WIL. To my heart, my faithful friend.

GUL. I have not shed a tear for many a
Tedious year ; now could I smile in death,
To lock thee thus within my arms.

WIL. Nay, never weep.

GUL. To see thee alive,

WIL. Better that I had died.

GUL. How chang'd thou art.

WIL. Time brings change with it.

GUL. Never will I leave thee more, my master.

WIL. Master ! Gulberth, that name befits me ill.
Why, how thy frame shakes.

GUL. My senses mock me ; it cannot be the
Self-same Wilfred. No, my age deceives me.

WIL. A burning sun—shipwreck and slavery,
Have my body much impair'd.
The same I am not.

GUL. And did Lord Edgar spurn thee from his house.

WIL. As he would a reptile, should it cross His path.

GUL. He has wrong'd thee beyond atonement.

WIL. Mark me, old man—a famish'd mother's cries,

Drove me a beggar to his house for food ;
His marble heart no prayers could melt,
But with a hellish smile, he proudly said,
“ Turn forth that harlot, and her bastard son ”
The pages of thy memory overlook, and
Thou'lt remember well that savage hour.

GUL. I do, indeed.

WIL. No moon, no stars, that night broke through the clouds,

But one dark mantle enwrapp'd the earth ;
In the unshelter'd street we stood alone,
Amid the raging tempest, and the falling deluge ;
My mother shriek'd for succour, and in my
Sinewey arms, to our lone hut, I bore her—
Where, with a prayer upon her lips, she died.

GUL. A day of woe.

WIL. May all the lingering tortures of the lost
Await me—may the sun ne'er rise upon
The busy day, but sink into oblivion—
May the wheels of time be clogg'd, to stop his
March o'er earth, and bring old chaos back again—
If I, not amply revenge my wrongs.

GUL. Just now, while busied in the house affairs,
I overheard, thy brother and his friends,
In deep conspiracy against the state.

WIL. Indeed !

GUL. I, also, heard last night, Ethelwood, and
Archberry, vow the death of a brave knight,
Who challeng'd Lord Edgar to the lists.

WIL. A knight say'st thou ?

GUL. A goodly one ; by name, Alaster ; one,
Who is betroth'd to a maid, as fair as ever
Knight paid homage to.

WIL. I would know more of this conspiracy.

GUL. Ay, to rob our king of life; I heard it in
The chamber where their council's held.

Would I had the power, and
Eloquence to speak, I'd make the walls
Of the great palace quake, but——

WIL. Not here, old man, let's to concealment.
Fain would I know the purport of thy tale.

GUL. Lord Edgar struck me Wilfred; me! who
had

Nurs'd his father. I'll not forgive him.
But in the moment of my heated blood,
I threaten'd to betray him to the king.

WIL. That was unwise, Gulberth.

GUL. But, to be beaten, like a dog!

WIL. 'Twas cruel; 'twas unmanly.

GUL. I have worn myself grey in his service;
And tried to love him, for his father's sake.

WIL. Thou shalt be rewarded yet.

GUL. Not on earth. I have almost passed the
Gulf, that parts the body and the soul:
I feel my days are number'd.

(Falls on Wilfred's neck.)

Enter Two Ruffians.

1st RUF. Which is he?

2nd RUF. He, with the grey head; let's strike at
once.

1st RUF. Watch thou the beggar; I'll silence him.

*(They approach cautiously; the first Ruffian seizes
GULBERTH, and throws him round, while the other stabs
him. The Ruffians exit immediately.)*

WIL. Villians! what have you done?

(GULBERTH falls.)

Have I no weapon to revenge thee?

GUL. This is Lord Edgar's work. Wilfred, I am dying.

WIL. What am I changing to; the cloud of Madness settles on my brain; nor can my Eyes rain tears to dispel the gloom. My blood Is clotted. A clammy sweat bedews my brow; And my heart is iron. (*striking his breast.*)

GUL. Close bye there is a house, where dwells A holy priest. Pray, help me there.

Ah! how cold grows my blood. Gently, Wilfred.

WIL. Come, Gulberth. To the upright man Death hath no terrors.

(*lifts him into his arms.*)

GUL. I do not fear; long enough I've liv'd. Wilfred, I lov'd thee in the cradle, I love Thee now. I feel the life blood flowing from My wound. Gently, to the priest, I pray.

WILFRED *bears him off.*

SCENE III. *An Apartment in Earl Monmouth's House.*

ELGINA *discovered seated.*

ELG. How tedious hath passed the sable night,
A heavy one to me: I could not rest,
Night's rude disturber stole into my brain,
With tales of death; my soul with fright appall'd
No shelter found.

What melancholy rides upon the air?

My garden choristers sing not their lay

So sweetly, but sounds inharmonious

Jar upon mine ear. Where bides my father?

Alaster too comes not! misboding ills

Creep through my heated brain and with leaden

Feel travel to my heart. Hark!

Oh! methinks in every hollow blast I
Hear my Alaster's step. Should he meet Lord Edgar!----
My troubl'd reason must not dwell on that,
Avaunt! the torturing sorrow! for see
My lov'd father comes.

(*enter* EARL MONMOUTH)

MON. My Elgina! (*embraces her*)

ELG. (*placing a chair for him*) you are weary, father.

MON. My child! sweet as the music of the spheres,
Is to a father's heart the welcome voice
Breath'd by the darling of his age,

ELG. What tempest clouds thy brow, it gathers o'er
Thy face. Return, sweet comfort to my dear
Father's heart, and drive pale sadness hence. Come
Unburthen all thy woes; give kindling joy
Her seat again.

MON. Since first from thy mother's arms I press'd
thee

In mine own, I have cherished thee with all
A father's fondness; pray'd for thy well doing,
Thou hast repay'd my care by sweet smiling
Gratitude, and heaven-born love. The seeds of virtue,
Which with fostering hand, thy mother planted
In thy youthful mind, each day I behold,
Like a ripening harvest, shooting forth in bloom.

ELG. Dear father, you over-rate me much.

MON. When I shall leave this tenement of clay,
To learn the mysteries of another world,
Let not my precepts be forgotten.

ELG. Dear father, talk not thus; wert thou away,
I should be, as the lost pilgrim in the
Sandy desert;----no helping hand to guide
My steps;----no balmy voice to cheer my drooping
Heart; no gushing spring to quench my thirst.

MON. In thy fair cheek I see thy mother's face;
Even so she looked, oh sainted image!
Such the placid light with which her beauty dawn'd
Forgive those drops of weakness my child.

ELG. Tears oft looked graceful on the manly cheek ;
But give me to know the cause ; if thou weep'st
Should not I, that am a part of thee.

MON. Thou lov'st Alaster.

ELG. I deny it not, my father.

MON. Elgina and Alaster; names coup'd
Oft by thy mother and myself. Well
Should nought befall him tomorrow the torch
Of hymen shall blaze forth, and light ye to your joys.

ELG. Is he then in danger?

MON. I trust not---his cause is just.

ELG. Father, thy words fall upon my heart like
Flaked ice, freezing up the currents that
Sustain it; I guess his jeopardy; lord
Edgar and Alaster---

MON. For combat, meet in the lists.

ELG. Forbid it heaven! he will not 'scape their
Bloody fangs. Say he shall not go, or drive
Me to despair.

MON. Not go!

ELG. He will perish.

MON. Better to perish, than his honor should bear
The smallest stain, the nicest scrutiny could discover

ELG. For me he risks his life, for me he dies.

MON. Would'st have him walk the earth the scoff of
man,
With coward branded on his brow?

ELG. (*with a burst of enthusiasm*) Not one drop of
coward blood dwells in his noble veins!

MON. In the face of all the world he must prove it so.

ELG. The lists! oh, how oft' hath thy walls echo'd
To the shrieks of dying knights, and to the clank
Of battle arms! dire extremity!

MON. At mid-day to-morrow is the hour appointed.

ELG. Heaven protect him!

MON. Thou would'st not have him basely avoid
the combat?

ELG. No! by his honor!

MON. Think'st thou he could do so?

ELG. No; he's too noble! too good, and great in soul,
To sink so low in shame. Truth be his
Lance! his shield and buckler, virtue and honor!
His umpire be his god!

MON. Wilt witness the combat?

ELG. No father; I'll pray for his safety.

MON. Come in daughter and calm thy fears; his cause
is good,

ELG. And heaven is just

(*excaunt.*)

END OF ACT III.

ACT IVth.

SCENE. I. *A room in a public house.*

Wilfred disguised seated at a table on the right, the first ruffian at table on the left.

RUF. Why dost not talk friend?

WIL. (*eating*) Thank you I'd rather eat.

RUF. Art not hired by Lord Edgar?

WIL. True; I receive his hire, and serve him.

RUF. He is rich, and may be—

WIL. (*in a low voice*) Our King.

RUF. (*starting*) Hush! What you are one of us?

WIL. I am *myself*, and act with my best skill
For mine own interest and country's honor.

RUF. That's right ; spoken well ; take thou a sip of
My cup. (*offering it.*)

WIL. No ; I'd rather drink water.

RUF. Why?

WIL. I'd have my brain clear. I have work to do.

RUF. I can guess it.

WIL. Perhaps not.

RUF. An order to murder Alaster.

WIL. Thou hast much penetration.

RUF. I have work myself that tends that way.

WIL. What—To let out a life ?

RUF. Yes ; but I'm used to it.

WIL. Whose life ?

RUF. Come closer, and I'll tell thee.

(*they rise from their seats and go forward.*)

WIL. Now tell me : I may help thee, perchance.

RUF. Lord Edgar's brother is the man I mean,
He has return'd from some far distant land.

WIL. What, the bastard?

RUF. Even he.

WIL. Dost know him?

RUF. I saw him last night.

WIL. Where?

RUF. With an old man, nam'd Gulberth who's breath
Is stopp'd for ever.

WIL. What was the old man's crime?

RUF. He threatened to betray the conspiracy.

WIL. Ha, indeed!

RUF. And Lord Edgar deem'd it best to have him
Silenc'd, and so honor'd me with the job.

WIL. But art sure 'twas Lord Edgar's brother thou
Saw'st.

RUF. Why I judge from the rags which cover'd him
When I describ'd the man, Lord Edgar vow'd
Twas he, and gave an instant order for his death.

WIL. Thou had'st better seek him out, or he may
Evade thy negligence.

RUF. If he escape my dagger he deserves to
Pass unharm'd. Alaster you will—

WIL. Finish. I've whet my dagger for the purpose.

RUF. Ha! ha! Earl Monmouth will have to find a
Champion, for his son.

WIL. It will be rare sport.

RUF. And, who in England shall meet Lord Edgar?
Well, good bye; and to night we meet.

WIL. Close by the palace.

RUF. Good.

(*exit.*)

WIL. Oh, murd'rous wretch! though not so bad
As that arch-fiend, my brother.

Brother! no, no, I will not call him so.

Outcast as I am; with all my misery,

I would not change the throbbings of my heart—

My bed of straw—my water—and stale crust

To be Lord Edgar, ten times o'er; with that

Stupendous load, a guilty conscience.

Let me my instructions examine straight.

(*takes out letter*)

'Twill do—'twill.—Let fall thy sable curtains night.
My soul for action is madly thirsty ;
To do that deed will guild my bastard name ;
A deed shall cover earth, and reach remotest time.
Hell's dark agents their torches flash, that soon
Shall light them to their ruin. My gleeful
Heart is glad. Now to the King ; and then for
Alaster. Heart be still ! tremble Edgar
At the thunder of thy fall ; thy cloud is
Charg'd with bolts that soon will burst to crush thee.

(rushes off.)

SCENE II. *Lord Edgar's House.*

enter LORD EDGAR, ETHELWOOD, and ARCHBURY.

EDG. Gulberth's dead ?

ETHEL. Ay my Lord.

EDG. Poor fellow ! I pity him ; but 'twas the
Only way to give silence to his tongue.
But Alaster—

ETHEL. Doubt not, my Lord he'll soon be with
him

Archbury and myself, by seeming accident
Will encounter him on his way from court ;
When this said ruffian shall despatch him.

ARCH. Alaster not appearing in the lists
May breed suspicion.

EDG. No, 'twill be thought cowardice alone in him,
And more exalt my interest, which will
Gain ground apace.

ETHEL. The issue is fast drawing on

EDG. Go now, good friends, and oversee them
I shall sup to night at the Palace, with
Some of our friends of the court.

ETHEL. We will.

EDG. My followers to-morrow shall be at
The palace, and to give a coloring
Shall join with Monmouth.

ETHEL. We will in all things most discreetly act.

EDG. Farewell, then, to both of ye. Fortune be
Your speed! my soul is gloomy till I know
The sequel of this night's dark business.

(exit ETHELWOOD and ARCHBURY.)

'Spite of my hopes fear rests upon my heart
With the weight of iron. Oh! for the days
Again, when dreams ne'er troubl'd my aching
Brain. I feel I am a very coward;
Nor can I help despising the thing I am.
My father bade me as life pass'd from him,
Ne'er to forget Wilfred was his son; and
To hold him in my love, as though he were
In truth my father's twin-born child; and, as
I took the oath, my father, with a smile
Upon his lips expir'd. Oh, cursed pride!
How vile and base thy purchase and, thou black
Ambition! groveling appetite, how dost
Thou cringe and stoop!

(enter ELGINA veiled.)

ELG. Lord Edgar, my presumption pardon.

(throws aside her veil.)

EDG. Elgina! can it be! thou art welcome,
As the returning orb of day to the
Dew-cover'd hill's; and, thus at thy feet, let
Me kneel in admiration of thy charms.

ELG. Lord Edgar without my father's sanction
I am come; so rise and hear my words.

EDG. Speak on; my every sense attends thee.

ELG. There is a feud between Alaster and
Thyself--A deadly one. Thou hast wronged him.

EDG. Wronged him! 'Tis well thou art a woman

ELG. There is an awful hour which all do wish
Bright and joyous----quiet and undisturb'd----
No care no dejected passions to cloud
The mind----And that is when we die. The clock
Of death to the wicked man, is awful
In its sound, for it rings the knell of a
Soul, gone to answer to that tribunal,
For deeds done in its tenement of clay.
To the righteous man, the peal is like a
Mother's lullaby to her dear infant
Gliding into the sweet arms of slumber.
Let virtue halo thy closing days

EDG. Elgina, what mean'st thou? what would'st
thou infer?

ELG. If thou dost wish to live in good men's
Thoughts, or live beyond the grave; confess thy
Fault; and, Alaster meet not in the lists.

EDG. Ha! dost thou plead for him!

ELG. If thou dost basely slay him; conscience,
In a thousand fiend-like forms, will tear thy
guilty breast.

EDG. The stings of conscience have no point for
Me: I have a heart can brave 'em.

ELG. Alaster sav'd thy life.

EDG. Who told thee that?

ELG. Did he not Lord Edgar?

EDG. Granted. But, did Alaster, send thee here
That in return, I should forego the combat?

ELG. He'd scarce humiliate so low.

EDG. He is my rival in love.

ELG. Thy rival!

EDG. In thy heart.

ELG. In my heart, thou ne'er did'st hold a place;
Alaster, the gallant brave Alaster,
I shame not to own it, reigns there alone;
Nor can all the tales Hell's minister ere
Forg'd dethrone him of his sceptre and his crown.

EDG. (*sarcastically*) Indeed!

ELG. I ask of thee justice.

EDG. Then know I hate that boy, thy minion;

He has wronged me woman ; I seek amends :
Be thou assured of this ; I will not spare
His dastard life ; should fortune favor me,
His every groan will be music to mine ear,

ELG. Guilt was ever cowardly. I'll plead with thee
No more. Fare thee well, great lord ; and learn to
Know, how a woman can despise thee

(*exit.*)

EDG. Go, proud maid, thy words affect me not ; wait
Till to-morrow ; then in very agony
Wring thy hands ; and, in vain, for Alaster call.
Then comes my triumph. Ha ! ha ! ha ! vengeance
My wounded honor best will heal. (exit.)

SCENE III. *Alaster's House. Table on which is a full
suit of Armour.*

STRANBURG and EDWERTH, *discovered.*

STRAN. Well, there's my master's armour and his
sword burnished and polished with my greatest skill.

EDW. That's good sound gear, and 'twill take a hard
blow to pierce it, I trow.

STRAN. Faith will it ; and a better man, to my mind,
than Lord Edgar ; for all his upstart wealth and great-
ness. But the morrow will give proof.

EDW. That mail hath had many a dint I see.

STRAN. Ay ; in the wars it hath done service.

EDW. Did'st ever try thy fortune with the sword ?

STRAN. Not I ; faith I've no stomach for such sport ;
'tis dangerous in the extreme to play with such sharp in-
struments. I like it not. Let me rather die in comfort
upon my bed, with a Priest by my pillow, and friends.

EDW. Wisely spoken Stranburg ; yet should some
knave do thee a great wrong ; how would'st thou act ?

STRAN. I'd knock him down, if I could; if not, why, by my beard, I should have to bear it; I know no other way.

EDW. Ha! ha! ha! a meak and quiet course.

STRAN. If I should kill him, I could not eat him; besides, I would prefer a conscience unstained with blood; then should I sleep without the dreams that troubles those who have the blood of mortals on their souls. Bad ghosts appear I'm told, and horrible shrieks are heard; for I most solemnly and reverentially believe, that spirits walk abroad at night and do much mischief to those guilty souls.

EDW. I never saw anything to fright me, save things of earth.

STRAN. Nor I, nor I, but then 'tis certain such spirits are full oft around us bringing misfortune. I would not see a ghost--- (*a knock.*) the holy saints preserve me! (*affrighted*)

EDW. 'Tis only our master. (*opens door.*)

(*enter ALASTER.*)

ALA. Are all my orders executed?

STRAN. I have done as thou did'st bid me.

ALA. That's right my good fellow. What's the hour?

STRAN. It lacks of the curfew.

ALA. I am ordered to the palace; go, thou, to the Earl Monmouth, and say, by time in the morning I will be with him.

STRAN. I shall obey you.

ALA. And at earliest dawn I must be awoke. Now leave me to myself.

(*exit STRANBURG and EDWERTH.*)

ALA.

(*pacing the apartment.*)

In my breast I feel the smiling God of
Love supremely reigns alone; his voice, more
Eloquent than all beside; would talk me
From the business of to-morrow; I must

Close my hearing ; bring honor to oppose.
Should I fall ; behind I leave, with Edgar's
Slander, a reputation blotted o'er.
He loves Elgina. Madness and horror !
Jealousy, thou fiercer fiend than hell itself,
Can show, avaunt thee from my breast !
My bark is launch'd let honor pilot thee.
Come, balmy slumber, calm this warring tempest
Of conflicting passions.

(*enter WILFRED.*)

Eh ! who art thou ?

WIL. A simple harmless man.

ALA. How can'st thou in ?

WIL. I found thy door unclos'd.

ALA. Did'st dodge me home ?

WIL. I did.

ALA. For what ?

WIL. To serve thee.

ALA. How ?

WIL. You must not fight Lord Edgar.

ALA. Must not !

WIL. Shall not. He may kill thee.

ALA. What then ?

WIL. The world could better spare his lordship.

ALA. What papers hold'st thou in thy hand ?

WIL. An order for thy death.

ALA. Villian !

WIL. I've been call'd that name before.

ALA. Ruffian !

WIL. And that too. (*gives paper*) Read that.

ALA. (*after reading*) 'Tis sign'd—

WIL. Lord Edgar.

ALA. 'Tis, by heaven !

WIL. Say rather, by hell, for he is its
primest minister.

ALA. Murderous fiend !

WIL. My opinion, well express'd.

ALA. Oh, the monster !

WIL. You must not meet him in the lists.

ALA. Not meet him ! What power shall stay me ?

WIL. The King's command. Read. (*gives order*)

ALA. (*reading.*) "Act thou, Alaster, as this gentleman the bearer of this command, shall direct ; so shall thou win my favor and exalt thyself."

WIL. As you read "gentleman," I marked a smile Upon your lips.

ALA. Your pardon sir. 'Tis the King's hand.

WIL. Ruffian garb ill suits my present office ;
A cloak is often used to cover vice,
Yet thus am I disguised in virtue's cause.

ALA. What dost wish ?

WIL. That suit of mail.

ALA. For what ?

WIL. At fitter time I'll tell thee.

ALA. I cannot fathom thee.

WIL. Come, go with me, and thou shalt learn, anon,
Things strange, come, buckle on thy sword ; and in
Return I'll take thy armour.

ALA. I am bound to obey his Majesty.

WIL. Thou art a good and loyal subject friend ;
And of a nature generous, frank, and open,
Of some experience, and I'm told of courage ;
Courage that constitutes a fearless heart,
And a prudent one ; you measure the depths
Before descending downwards, do you not ?
Be thou, of that mould ; thou wilt gain by it
The approving smile of thy lady love,
And Monmouth's approbation thy reward.

ALA. For what ?

WIL. For that, thou now art going to do. Take
Thy sword. (*Gives it him.*)

ALA. But—

WIL. Come, I'll tell thee as we pass the harbour.
Why pause ? it is the King's command, come on.

exit WILFRED and ALASTER.

SCENE. IV. *Stage dark; the exterior of a ruined Monastery.*

enter ARCHBERRY and ETHELWOOD.

ARCH. The night is dark and stormy.

ETHEL. 'Twill suit our purpose better.

ARCH. That ruffian has not yet arriv'd.

ETHEL. Should Alaster take some other road.

ARCH. He will not, this leads direct into the Palace.

(curfew bell tolls.)

enter WILFRED.

ETHEL. Who passes there ?

WIL. Your tool, my masters.

ETHEL. Thou art just in time.

WIL. I know it ; he comes ; e'en now I marked his Track ; in moody melancholy absorb'd,
This way he bends his steps.

ETHEL. Strike thou sure.

WIL. Ne'er fear me, stay, give me a sword.

ETHEL. Take mine. *(gives his sword.)*

ARCH. I will advance and hold him in converse,
While thou canst creep behind.

WIL. Good ! good ! he comes.

ALASTER *enters.*

ARCH. What's he that comes ?

ALA. A man.

WIL. What villian man art thou ?

ARCH. Now, strike !

Wilfred seizes Archberry, whom he disarms and throws to the ground ; while Alaster overcomes Ethelwood.

WIL. Now villians tremble.

ETHEL. Ruffian' wretch!

ARCH. Devil! devil!

WIL. Caught in your own snare. Ha! ha! ha!

ALA. What Ethelwood and Sir Walter Archberry,
Lord Edgar's hired ruffians!

WIL. No, traitors! that's the word; traitors! ha! ha!
You would be great, yet lack the soul of men;
Your base confed'rates, all are in my power;
All, even Lord Edgar, your would-be kingly master.
Baffl'd! baffl'd! onward, traitors, onward
To the palace. Attempt to fly, you die.

They go off; Ethelwood and Archberry guarded.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT. V.

SCENE. I. *A street near the lists ; people crossing from left to right.*

enter STRANBURG *and* EDWERTH.

STRAN. I tell thee, Edworth, I am ill at ease ;
At earliest dawn he bade me call him ;
And long before the crowing of the cock
I was prepar'd for labour.

EDW. He surely, came not home ;
Was not his armour sent for to the palace ;
He'll be in the lists ; fear not.

STRAN. The Earl seem'd much amaz'd when for
Alaster he enquir'd.

EDW. I noted on his brow a frown.

(trumpet sounds.)

STRAN. They are coming, I see the king.

EDW. Among'st the noble throng I see Lord Edgar,

STRAN. Can'st see the Earl ?

EDW. Yes ; I see him now, he is behind.

Enter, in procession : First,—Knights, bearing battle axes, shields, and spears ; secondly,—herald and trumpeter ; after which, the king and noblemen ; then, Lord Edgar, completely armed, two esquires, bearing sword and shield ; Earl Monmouth, next ; and, following in procession, men, women, and children.

STRAN. Alaster is not here ?

EDW. 'Tis very strange! should he not come!

STRAN. If at the third sounding of the brazen
Clarion, he appears not, his disgrace
Is seal'd, for ever; unless indeed,
A champion of noble blood, to sustain
His cause appears.

EDW. See, the lists they enter; and crowded
Galleries await the issue of the combat:
Shall we on?

STRAN. With all my heart.

exit Stranburg and Edwerth.

SCENE II. *The lists: the galleries crowded; king in
the centre, with Grand Marshal; LORD EDGAR, and
friends on left; LORD MONMOUTH on right.*

KING. When nobles disagree, there is a remedy;
The lists; the sword, the helmet, and the shield;
Where meeting man to man, you may amend
Your wrong. This is our law; England allows
A custom long establish'd. (*confers with Grand Marshal.*)

MON. (*aside*) Impatience hath turned me sick;
I tremble

Like a ghost affrighted child. Alaster,
Where art thou? dishonor cries not here.
What's to be done?

EDG. (*aside*) Ethelwood and Archberry come not;
No matter, they sent me proof the deed
Was done (*aloud.*)
Your Majesty, the hour is nigh.

MON. Not yet, look to the dial.

KING. Is Alaster still missing?

EDG. He hath not yet appear'd, my liege;
Methinks the challenger is somewhat tardy
To lag so coward like behind.

MON. Doubt not Lord Edgar, but Alaster,
Will a ready champion find.

EDG. Ha ! In whom ?

MON. In me, thou boasting Lord.

EDG. Thy wither'd hand had better grasp the
Distaff than the sword.

MON. Ha ! dost dare to try it ?

KING. Forbear, gentlemen, forbear ; we will not
Have thee wrangle in our presence.

Herald, let the trumpet sound.

(Trumpet sounds.)

EDG. *(aside)* This indeed is triumph ; 'twill
exalt me

High in power, and to-morrow I seize
Upon the throne. Heart restrain thy transports,
'Till sceptre, crown and princely robes adorn thee
Ay, ere to-morrow's sun shall on yon palace shine
My dagger's point shall pierce thy heart, great king.

KING. Sound the second trumpet.

(Trumpet sounds.)

EDG. Thy trumpet cannot wake the senseless dead.
Sound on till doomsday.

KING. No answer yet.

MON. So please your Majesty, one trumpet
Yet remains to sound.

EDG. Give me my sword and shield.

(takes them.)

Now Alaster, come forth ; or dishonor,
Shame, and infamy light on you.

KING. Sound the third and last trumpet.

(Trumpet.)

*The challenge is answered on the instant ; a general shout,
as a Knight in complete armour rushes on, and confronts
LORD EDGAR, who starts back astounded.*

EDG. Still alive ! But one chance is left.

*Music, the Knight kneels to the King, bows to the Assembly ;
then embraces Earl Monmouth.*

Trumpets and Kettle Drums.

They fight. After a few passes, they cross swords and struggle for a moment ; then renew the combat with redoubled vigour ; LORD EDGAR is disarmed, and falls upon his knees ; the Knight places his foot upon him. The King rises and interferes.

KING. Save his life.

(*shouts.*) Long live Alaster !

KING. Lord Edgar, thou art vanquished.

EDG. I do confess.

KNIGHT. Dost know me Edgar ?

(*puts up vizor.*)

EDG. Wilfred !

WIL. Thy brother.

EDG. Curses on curses light upon thee.

WIL. Edgar, dishonor lights on thee.

MON. I am amazed !

KING. Lord Edgar, and Wilfred brothers ; I must know more of this. Come follow to the palace. I have a secret worth your hearing.

(*Flourish.*)

(*As they retire up scene closes them in.*)

SCENE. III. (*Outside of the lists.*)

Enter STRANBURG, and EDWERTH.

STRAN. Well, wonders will never cease, Lord Edgar's brother returned whom all the world thought dead.

EDW. Alaster's champion too.

STRAN. It is a riddle I cannot solve, though I put my best discretion into action. Where can Alaster be ?

EDW. That's the mystery I fain would know, but cannot solve.

STRAN. What maiden is this coming towards us ?

EDW. I know not.

STRAN. By my troth, 'tis Earl Monmouth's daughter.

enter ELGINA.

ELG. (*eagerly*) Speak, the combat—

STRAN. Is over.

ELG. Lord Edgar.—

STRAN. Was beaten.

ELG. (*Falling on her knees.*)

Ye ministers of goodness accept my thanks!

Where is he? where is the proud champion!

Oh! let me press my husband to my heart,

That is on wing to seek him.

STRAN. Lady, Alaster was not in the lists.

ELG. I understand thee not.

STRAN. A champion came.

ELG. A champion!

STRAN. Alaster, since yesterday, hath not been seen.

ELG. Stay thy clamorous croaking, evil omen'd bird;
'Thy discordant tongue hath broke the music
String, that tuned my gleeful soul. Alaster
Not there; then were my dreams last night prophetic;
That fearful vision, that made my eye-balls start,
My heated blood stand still, and throb convulsive,
Shaking my trembling heart; they have slain him;
All night his shrieks wrung in my aching ears.

(*Enter* EARL MONMOUTH.)

MON. My child!

ELG. Where is my husband? where is Alaster?

MON. Be not alarmed, Elgina.

ELG. Thoughts of horror crowd my mind; last night
He came not, as he was wont; not e'en to
Say, farewell; my troubl'd reason is
Toss'd by a tempest of conflicting thoughts.
Father, father, they have murder'd him.

MON. Be not alarmed, the King's inform'd me
all was well.
And bade me bring thee quick to court, my child.

ELG. Lead, father, to the earth's extremest verge,
'To find my soul's ador'd one.

(Exit MONMOUTH and ELGINA.)

STRAN. I'll lay thee a wager, friend Edwerth.

EDW. About what?

STRAN. That the King had a hand in this business.

EDW. Why dost judge so?

STRAN. I have some penetration, and take
Good heed, of all I see and hear :
So let us follow on behind ; some further
Information may we gain.

(Exit STRANBURG and EDWERTH.)

SCENE THE LAST. *A Prison.*

ETHELWOOD, ARCHBERRY, CASWALLER, *and two Ruffians*
discovered, chained to the pillars in the back ground.

ETHEL. Shall we petition to the King ?

ARCH. I fear it will be useless.

ETHEL. These galling chains cut into my flesh.

2d. RUF. Custom is every thing. Now I have been
a resident in every dungeon in the kingdom ; and dont
feel perfectly well dressed without them.

Enter WILFRED and LORD EDGAR.
Edgar in chains.

WIL. Now, brother, behold.

EDG. What do I see?

WIL. The King dost know thy treason and thy deeds ;
'Thy partizan's have lost their venom'd stings,

And thy proud ambition, that soar'd so high,
Hath met a mighty fall ; look there, behold ;
The walls of this dark dungeon, alone can
Echo to their loud cries for vengeance.
Mad with despair, behold their sunken cheeks ;
Their eyes with boiling tears made red ;
Arms borne down with weight of fetters.
What heart will grieve for their distress, or mourn
The traitor's doom ? These are the heads of
That fierce band ; who, if uncheck'd
Had deluged this fair empire, with the blood
Of innocence. Edgar, thou would'st have made
England's court, a horde for very cut-throats ;
A sink for all pollution. Thou art foil'd ;
Yet 'tis justice, Edgar, thou hast wrong'd me ;
But, even now, my heart rejoices not,
But bleeds in every vein, huge drops of sorrow.

EDG. Villian ! with my last breath I'll curse thee.

WIL. Can'st thou bear the gaze, the pitiless gaze
Of that assembly, whom to-morrow,
Before the sun shall glide down the hill of
Heaven, will view with mockery the last
Throes of thy attainted soul. Poor Gulberth !
Alaster too ! cowardice and murder jointly
Seal'd his doom.

EDG. Think'st thou, drivelling fool ! thy words
appal me ?

No, bastard, I defy thee, and thy King ;
And am prepar'd to suffer for my crimes.

ETHEL. Our fearful peril, congeals my blood.

ARCH. All hope is lost !

WIL. I scorn to triumph over fallen foes ;
And look with pity on you.

ETHEL. Plead then for our lives.

WIL. Would that be justice ?

EDG. Seek not to conciliate the bastard.

WIL. But for thee, I had stalk'd thro' life in base
Disguise ; but, with repeated wrongs, my soul
Stood forth ; resolved her functions to assert :
Her power unfold ; leap'd from her narrow

Nest, with wings expanded—plume uprais'd ;
Caught in her talons, the savage vulture,
And stopp'd his rapid flight.

EDG. No more of this.

WIL. Commanding suits not well thy shackl'd limbs.
What, ho ! within there !

Enter Jailor.

Bear these traitors to another cell.

JAILOR. I shall obey you.

(retires up and takes off chains.)

WIL. Edgar, Gulberth died in these arms, you should
Have cherish'd him for our dear father's sake ;
Why did'st murder *him* ?

EDG. I will not answer.

WIL. Well may'st thou blanch and tremble ;
'That deed, on hell's dark register, accursed stands,
And fiends, with wonder, read the horrid tale.

*(The Jailor has by this time unchained the Conspirators,
and brings them down.)*

WIL. Lord Edgar remains with me.

They all go off but WILFRED and EDGAR.

Brother, now we are alone, I fain would
Ask, what action in my life, occasion'd thee
To hold me up to infamy and shame.
In childhood we lov'd ; as our boyish days passed on,
Each hour, our affection grew,
In the same bed we slumber'd, at the same
Board we feasted, hand in hand we rang'd the
Field, and cull'd the wild sweet flowers ;
And a thousand sportive tricks for pastime ;
Those were happy days ; I have dreamt of them,
When on my bed of leaves, my head pillow'd
By a tree, and seas divided us.

EDG. *(aside.)* I feel his power.

WIL. I resign'd my claim unto my father's
Large domain, but to obtain thy love ; you
Robb'd me e'en of that ; and to my injur'd mother,
Denied a crust of bread. Upon her grave,
Edgar, I swore to be reveng'd.

EDG. No more ; I'll close my ears : already, the
Fiends howl to receive my perjur'd soul.

WIL. Edgar, listen to me.

*Enter KING, EARL MONMOUTH, and ELGINA, and
remain at back.*

EDG. Torture me not.

WIL. Edgar thou art free ; here is thy pardon.
(produces paper.)

EDG. *(Taking it)* Hast thou done this ?

WIL. Give me thy hand.

EDG. 'Tis stain'd with blood ; strike thy
weapon here,

Into my guilty breast, and, so revenge thy wrongs.

WIL. A dagger would not purify that mansion.

EDG. *(Draws poignard)* May heaven forgive me !
(Stabs himself.)

*King, Earl Monmouth and Elgina rush down as Edgar
falls.*

KING. Hold ! what hast thou done, rash man !

WIL. 'Tis too late.

EDG. *(Seeing Elgina.)* Lady, I kill'd Alaster ; but—

WIL. No he lives ; come forth, Alaster.

(Enter ALASTER.)

EDG. Alive ! my soul is lighter by a crime.

ELG. My Alaster, safe ! *(Goes to him.)*

EDG. Wilfred, forgive me.

WIL. My brother Edgar ; from my soul I do.

EDG. I soon shall know the worst.

WIL. May heaven have mercy on thy soul !

(Edgar Dies.)

CURTAIN.

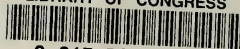




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